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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Towards a new order for children

SUMMARY

In 1990, a series of promises were made to children around the world, stemming from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children. The present paper describes how in 1991 UNICEF translated those promises into action.

Chapter I describes programme delivery at the country level, the main mission of which continues to be the provision of basic services for the survival, development and protection of children and the empowerment of women in developing countries through field-based, field-oriented work. Chapter II describes the broad range of UNICEF work in advocacy and social mobilization. Chapter III discusses the follow-up to the World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action at the national, regional and international levels, including the role of UNICEF in support of national programmes of action. Chapter IV describes the challenges for 1992 and beyond and gives 10 specific proposals for a new order for children.

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INTRODUCTION

1. For UNICEF, and the world's children, 1990 was the most extraordinary year in history. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the convening of the World Summit for Children, at which the participants adopted an ambitious Declaration and Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, captured the attention and imagination of all those concerned with the well-being of children. The achievement of the goal of universal child immunization (UCI), saving the lives of over 3 million children in 1990, was a concrete illustration of the fact that the Convention and the Declaration were not statements of lofty principles and hollow promises, but goals and strategies that are eminently possible, given the necessary political will and vision.

2. The present report chronicles the UNICEF contribution in translating the promises of 1990 into action in 1991. UNICEF made its contribution in three major ways: programme delivery; advocacy and social mobilization on behalf of children and women; and support for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The focus of the report is, of necessity, on action by UNICEF, which is often only a small part of a much wider process of country-by-country action and the cooperation of many organizations.

I. PROGRAMME DELIVERY AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

3. UNICEF continues to be a field-based and field-oriented organization. Its primary mission is to support the provision of basic services for the survival, development and protection of children and the empowerment of women in families and communities of developing countries. In 1991, 80 per cent of total UNICEF expenditure, including 97 per cent of programme expenditure, was allocated in support of country programmes. Also in 1991, 84 per cent of UNICEF staff were based in country and regional offices, with the majority of headquarters staff directly involved in providing support to country programmes (purchasing supplies, recruiting personnel, raising funds, advising on programme strategies, etc.). In many countries, UNICEF is the only agency of the United Nations system with staff outposted to province and district levels, and UNICEF makes use of more National Professional officers in its work in developing countries than any other United Nations agency or, for that matter, any bilateral or multilateral donor.

4. In terms of programme delivery, 1991 was another good year for UNICEF-assisted country programmes. The progress made in child survival and development in the late 1980s expanded further in 1991. The achievement of 80 per cent child immunization in 1990 was sustained, and efforts were made to strengthen and expand other basic health services using the vast network of service delivery and communications channels mobilized for UCI. Knowledge of and access to life-saving oral rehydration therapy to treat diarrhoeal diseases increased to 63 per cent of households in developing countries, with

major gains in Africa. Some 47 countries have developed national programmes to combat acute respiratory infections (ARI), now the largest killer of children in developing countries. A major international meeting on the control of ARI was held in December 1991, sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF. It was instrumental in promoting a global consensus and country-level actions to combat ARI. Although there has been no significant breakthrough in the control of malaria or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), UNICEF has been actively involved in promoting preventive measures as part of country programmes in several of the most seriously affected countries. Family planning and child spacing also received increased attention in a number of UNICEF country programmes as part of safe motherhood and women's health services.

5. The UNICEF nutrition strategy approved by the Executive Board in 1990 has now become the standard approach in most country programmes. Significant advances were made in 1991 with respect to the promotion and support of breast-feeding through the "baby-friendly" hospital initiative launched jointly by WHO and UNICEF. It has served as a catalyst for putting hospitals and maternities in the forefront of supporting breast-feeding and ending the practice of free and low-cost supply of infant formula to these institutions by formula manufacturing companies. UNICEF provided support for the control of the three major micronutrient deficiencies - vitamin A, iodine and iron - in many country programmes. It joined WHO, UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development in organizing an international policy conference on "Ending Hidden Hunger", which served to highlight the importance of these nutrients as "super-micronutrients", with the potential for contributing to the drastic reduction of the deficiencies that lead to malnutrition and disability among millions of children and adults. UNICEF has also been active on other fronts in promoting family- and community-based nutrition and household food security schemes, nutrition surveillance and advocacy of national nutrition policies and strategies.

6. Safe drinking water supply and sanitation continued to be a major field of UNICEF support, with emphasis on low-cost technologies appropriate for rural areas and peri-urban communities. In 1991, good progress was made in four crucial areas: community management and maintenance; development of a better monitoring and reporting system; social mobilization within the sector; and supportive linkages with other sectors. A related area of notable progress was in efforts to eliminate dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) in several African countries.

7. UNICEF laid the groundwork to provide greater support to the universalization of basic primary education and literacy in 1991. UNICEF staff capacity in this field was augmented in 1991, as was its search for innovative education alternatives, including those outside the formal education system. Collaboration with the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and other agencies has been intensified. Many of the new country programmes being submitted to the Executive Board in 1992 reflect the expanded vision of education for all by the year 2000 as articulated at the World Conference on Education for All and reaffirmed by the World Summit for Children.

8. Many areas of concern, including women in development, monitoring and evaluation, received considerable attention and support at the field level. UNICEF was also called upon to assist in an unusually large number of emergency situations in 1991. It was a year of attempting to put into practice the concepts of "corridors of peace" and "days of tranquillity" to protect children in especially difficult circumstances from Albania to Yugoslavia, from Cambodia to Kuwait, and from Liberia to Zaire.

II. ADVOCACY AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CHILDREN

9. Compared with the needs of children in developing countries, the financial resources that UNICEF can make available for programmes for children are very modest indeed. UNICEF, therefore, seeks to use the programmes and projects it supports as catalysts for influencing policies and encouraging action by others - families, communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Governments and donors - to pursue the goals and strategies for enhancing the survival, protection and development of children on a much larger scale. This is the essence of UNICEF advocacy.

10. In supporting programme delivery in the various areas described above, UNICEF has sought, through advocacy and social mobilization, to create popular awareness of, demand for and participation in the programmes in such a way as to create momentum for expanded coverage and accelerated delivery of services, as was so effectively demonstrated in the UCI programme. In addition to the effective delivery of services through programme cooperation, a second effective instrument that UNICEF has sought to marshall on behalf of children is the creative use of the potential of modern communications. Using the outreach capacity of radio, television, video cassette recorders, popular theatre, NGOs and civic groups, UNICEF has worked to bring relevant knowledge and practical skills to parents so that they can improve the quality of life of their children. Through its major publications, State of the World's Children, Adjustment with a Human Face, Children on the Frontline, Children and the Environment and many others, UNICEF has tried to demonstrate to policy makers and to the general public how investment in children is essential to sustain development. Such publications as Facts for Life, now available in 130 languages and adapted for use in 90 countries, and the many country-specific educational and training materials in audio-visual and print form, are now reaching and motivating millions of families.

11. The broad range of UNICEF work in advocacy and social mobilization includes actions on the part of individuals and families (changes in sexual behaviour for protection against AIDS, the importance of birth spacing,

delayed marriages); issues of debt relief and the peace dividend for children; and the promotion of the ethic of a "first call for children", a principle of universal relevance.

12. In the past, some members of the Executive Board have expressed concern about the relative balance between programme delivery and policy advocacy carried out by UNICEF. Experience over the last decade has shown how these are, in fact, two facets of all UNICEF-assisted programmes that are synergistic and complementary. It is felt that UNICEF would not be fulfilling its potential, or its duty, if it were to confine its support to the traditional form of project execution - simply providing supplies, equipment and cash assistance. On the other hand, there is danger in an excessive focus on advocating what the world could and should do. All UNICEF-assisted projects today have an element of advocacy that seeks to prove that concrete, measurable advances are feasible, and through such examples, influences policies and encourages the allocation of resources for children. The ultimate test of UNICEF advocacy, whether through traditional projects or through new forms of social mobilization, must be its success in producing significant programme results for the well-being of children. The Executive Director believes that the programme results achieved in 1991, as documented in the present report, reflect the powerful combination of ideas and action - advocacy and programme delivery - that characterizes UNICEF cooperation.

III. FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN

13. The Executive Board, in decision 1991/10 (E/ICEF/1991/15), requested the Executive Director to provide full support to developing countries for the achievement of the objectives contained in the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children. The Board also requested the Executive Director to present at the 1992 session an analysis of the follow-up to the World Summit as called for in paragraph 35 (v) of the Plan of Action. A more detailed report on the follow-up is contained in document E/ICEF/1992/12.

14. At the national level, 64 additional heads of State and Government have joined the original 71 leaders who had signed the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. It is believed that no other document in the world bears the signatures of so many world leaders (135 heads of State and Government and 24 senior ministers). As part of their commitment to "keep their promise" to children, Governments in over 100 industrialized and developing countries are currently preparing national programmes of action to achieve the goals for children and development in the 1990s as agreed in the Summit Declaration. In addition, in many countries, programmes of action are being prepared at provincial and municipal levels, as well as by NGOs and civic groups.

15. At regional and international levels, heads of State and Government have collectively reaffirmed their commitment to follow through on the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit at such high-level meetings as those of

the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Commonwealth, Francophone and Ibero-American summits, involving heads of State and Government from all parts of the world.

16. At the international level, the United Nations system has taken a number of follow-up measures since the World Summit. In December 1990, the General Assembly, in resolution 45/217 (21 December 1990), urged the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system to take into account the goals, strategies and recommendations of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action in carrying out their programmes. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General wrote to the heads of all relevant agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), urging them to take appropriate action in their areas of competence. These agencies have indicated to the Secretary-General how they plan to respond to the appeal of world leaders, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General.

17. UNICEF has played its part in the follow-up to the World Summit, mindful of the Executive Board directive that it do so within its mandate, comparative advantage and resources. UNICEF support to developing countries in their follow-up to the Summit has been as part of the country programme process. Thus, the situation analysis of children and women that UNICEF assists Governments to prepare has also served as useful background material for the preparation of national programmes of action. The national programme, in turn, provides the larger national framework within which the UNICEF programme of cooperation is situated. UNICEF cooperation in monitoring and evaluation, as part of the country programme, is a useful foundation on which Governments are building a database for monitoring progress towards the achievement of national programme goals.

18. Clearly the scope of these programmes is much larger than the modest UNICEF programme of cooperation, as many other agencies, both national and international, need to participate in their implementation. UNICEF is fortunate that most of its country programmes will inevitably have a symbiotic relationship with national programmes of action. This puts an additional responsibility on UNICEF and on the Executive Board to seize every opportunity to advocate and promote an active follow-up to the World Summit by relevant United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, international financial institutions, NGOs and all others in a position to assist.

19. While the Executive Director is encouraged by the follow-up to the World Summit to date, he wishes to bring to the attention of the Board the challenges that lie ahead. National programmes of action in developing countries indicate that achievement of the goals for children in the 1990s will require substantial - but not inconceivable - amounts of additional resources from both developing and donor countries. However, it is not always evident in national programmes how such resources will be mobilized. It is clear that over half of the additional resources needed will have to come through restructuring of existing national budgets and existing aid resources to give higher priority to achieving the goals for children. Both the UNDP

Human Development Report 1991 and the UNICEF State of the World's Children 1991 argue that there is indeed room for significant restructuring of national budgets, as well as aid budgets in favour of human development priorities, including programmes for children, considering the relatively low level and proportion of budget and aid allocations for these programmes at present. Whether there is adequate political will and vision to carry out such restructuring is far from certain.

20. The biggest challenge for achieving the World Summit goals will be in the least developed countries (LDCs), especially in sub-Saharan Africa. There the rate of progress required will be substantially greater than in other developing countries, while the financial and human resource bases needed to accelerate progress are the weakest. The Donors Conference on Assistance to African Children, to be convened by OAU in November 1992, will be a test of the political will and vision of leaders in both Africa and donor countries to mobilize support for honouring the commitments of the World Summit.

21. UNICEF has been advocating two measures for some time: resolution of the developing country debt, using such modalities as "debt relief for children" and swaps; and the allocation of a fraction of the proceeds from disarmament to children. It continues to be the hope of UNICEF that these proposals will find a place on the crowded agenda of the post-cold war era. As UNICEF has argued in the State of the World's Children 1991, ending the worst manifestations of poverty of one quarter of mankind - the more than 1 billion persons who live and die with preventable hunger, disease and illiteracy - should certainly rank alongside the issues of preserving peace and protecting the environment as priority items on the agenda of a new world order.

22. In the areas of preserving the peace and protecting the environment, the world does not yet have a universal consensus on how this should be done. There is, however, a consensus on specific goals and clear strategies for children and development in the 1990s contained in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. The UNICEF Executive Board, which spearheaded the formulation of most of the goals and strategies eventually endorsed by the World Summit, has a unique role and responsibility to ensure that they figure prominently on the agenda in these historic times.

IV. CHALLENGES FOR 1992 AND BEYOND

23. Continuing a high level of programme delivery and accelerating progress towards the achievement of country programme goals will be the cornerstone of UNICEF action and advocacy in 1992. UNICEF will need to be ever more innovative and resourceful in social mobilization and building alliances in support of programmes for children, including the national programmes of action.

24. In 1991, leaders of several regional groups called for meetings and conferences to mobilize national, regional and international support for

action for children. Prominent among these are: an OAU Donor's Conference on Assistance to African Children, scheduled for November 1992; a SAARC conference on children, scheduled for September 1992; a conference on the Arab child to be convened by the League of Arab States in September 1992; a summit meeting of the leaders of the Pacific Forum to be held in July 1992; and the commitment by heads of State of Central America to formulate a regional plan of action in 1992 to help implement their national programmes of action. Along with other United Nations agencies and donors, UNICEF will be expected to lend support to these important initiatives. The Executive Director looks to the Executive Board for guidance as to how best UNICEF might assist in these endeavours.

25. The break-up of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with many of the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States joining the ranks of developing countries, presents a new challenge for UNICEF and other United Nations agencies that are already being requested to provide technical and financial assistance. The Executive Board will need to provide guidance to the secretariat on how UNICEF should play its part in this endeavour. In preparation for this, UNICEF is making an assessment of the situation of children in the republics of the Commonwealth. Once this is done, and once the varying needs of these countries have been studied, the next step will be to ensure that the proposed response in no way diverts UNICEF from addressing the urgent problems and needs of Africa, LDCs and other developing countries which merit continuing high organizational priority.

26. Efforts to improve management efficiency, accountability and effectiveness will be an important part of UNICEF work in 1992. The work carried out by the Reference Group of the Executive Board on the budget format and related issues will help to guide the secretariat, as will feedback from the institutional evaluation of UNICEF being carried out by CIDA, the Danish International Development Agency, the Australian International Development Aid Bureau and the Government of Switzerland. As a voluntarily funded organization, UNICEF is keenly aware that it needs continuously to learn and sustain the confidence of its Executive Board, donors, developing country counterparts and other supporters if it is to be effective in discharging its mission.

27. In these times of extraordinary change, when the world is shedding its ideological divisions, authoritarian politics, militarization and neglect of the environment, it is reasonable to expect that the international community will commit itself to the task of overcoming the worst aspects of absolute poverty: malnutrition; preventable diseases; and illiteracy. With guidance from its Executive Board and inspiration from the World Summit for Children, UNICEF strives to play its part in helping countries and communities to formulate action-oriented proposals backed by proven techniques and solutions. As the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children noted, the financial resources required are modest compared to the great challenges that beckon. The Executive Director seeks Board leadership, support and guidance in enabling UNICEF to play an influential role in securing a place for the well-being of children in the newly emerging world order of the 1990s and beyond.

28. In the State of the World's Children 1991, the Executive Director made 10 specific proposals for a new world order as seen from the perspective of a world-wide organization which comes into daily contact with some of the greatest failings of the old order. The Executive Board may wish to add its own voice of support and commitment to these proposals:

(a) The promise of the World Summit for Children should be kept and a new world order should bring an end to malnutrition, preventable diseases and illiteracy among so many millions of the world's children;

(b) The principle of a "first call for children" - that protection for the growing bodies and minds of the young ought to have a first call on societies' resources - should become an accepted ethic of a new world order;

(c) If the issues of malnutrition, preventable diseases and widespread illiteracy are not confronted as a new world order evolves, then it will be more difficult to reduce the rate of population growth and make the transition to environmentally sustainable development;

(d) The growing consensus on the importance of market economic policies should be accompanied by a corresponding consensus on the responsibility of Governments to guarantee basic investments in people;

(e) Increases in international aid should be based on a sustained and measurable commitment to meeting minimum human needs and for maintaining, in difficult times, the principle of a "first call for children";

(f) International action on debt, aid and trade should create an environment in which economic reform in the developing world can succeed in allowing its people to earn a decent living;

(g) A process of demilitarization should begin in the developing world and, in step with that process, falling military expenditures in industrialized nations should be linked to significant increases in international aid for development and for the resolution of common global problems;

(h) Africa's debt should be reduced and the continent should be given sufficient external support to allow internal reform to succeed in regenerating the momentum of development;

(i) A new world order should oppose the apartheid of gender as vigorously as the apartheid of race;

(j) The responsible planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways to improve the quality of life on earth - both now and in the future; one of the greatest mistakes of our times is the failure to realize that potential.